

College Fucking Sucks by d0ntyouforgetaboutme

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Summary:

Everybody warned Richie about how hard college would be, but nobody prepared him for his bipolar disorder making everything even harder

1. I Am Damaged At Best

Author's Note:

Did I just project my own issues with my first semester of college because of my bipolar disorder onto Richie? Yep. My college experience as told by Richie.

Summary for the Chapter:

College is hard for Richie

God, college fucking sucks.

Richie found himself learning this the hard way as he struggled through his first semester. Sure, everyone warned him and his friends that college was going to be hard and difficult to adjust to at first, but those people didn't consider giving an additional warning that throwing bipolar disorder into the mix would increase the problems and make everything ten times harder. It would have been fucking nice if they had.

There was a lot of work, but that's a given with college. Richie's high school teachers warned him that he couldn't rely on his natural intelligence and get away slacking off in college and doing everything at the last minute, but here he was doing exactly that. Sure, it didn't always work, but he was still getting away with it and he counted that as a victory.

Richie only had one class that he actually physically went to, the other four were online. That was probably the best thing for him because he spiraled into one of the worst depressive episodes he'd had in awhile at the beginning of the semester. Also not helping was the fact that he only got formally diagnosed with bipolar II disorder and put on new medicine right before the semester started. Physically going to five classes where he couldn't have his phone to help him was not doable while he was in this state. Richie was secretly dreading having to eventually really go to all of his classes and put in a full effort like all of his friends. He watched how hard everyone

worked and studied everyday in awe, trying to push away the guilt over how much he just fucked around.

Richie considered himself extremely lucky that the Losers all ended up going to the same college. It was a good pick for all of them. It was far away enough from Derry but not too far (okay, that was mostly a perk for their parents), had everyone's major, wasn't ungodly expensive, campus was safe. He was beyond grateful that he had all of his best friends by his side, especially since he had no idea what would happen to him if he didn't. And he had Stan as his roommate, which was, again, the best thing for him.

The way Stan was helping Richie through this episode of severe depression with almost expertise was amazing. He checked on Richie's moods, made sure he kept on his work, did his best to keep Richie from sleeping all day (often to no avail), and made sure Richie kept up on his medicine.

What Stan didn't know was that Richie started cutting again when college started, Richie made sure of that. He felt so much guilt over keeping it from everyone that he'd started cutting himself again, but he told himself that he couldn't put one more stressor on his friends. They were all worried enough about him as it was, he couldn't do that to them.

Richie sat in his dorm contemplating all of these things, sprawled out across his bed, as he procrastinated writing an essay he had due in a few days. He started shaking his foot impatiently, trying to cope with this new state.

He didn't quite understand it; he was still depressed and sleeping all the time, still having thoughts of self hatred and occasionally suicide, but he still would get some of the racing thoughts and self indulgent fantasies. He would acquire new interests and then drop them instantly when he moved on to something else. When he got extra energy, he would be very happy and giggly, but was easier to anger. It took all of his energy to keep from snapping at people when he got angry and agitated. And when he was all by himself for too long the only things he could think about were cutting and masturbation. He mumbled "I'm losing my fucking mind, man" to himself on almost a daily basis. The fact that he got any work done at all was a miracle.

Richie grabbed his phone and smiled at his lock screen, a picture of him and Eddie sitting on a bench at a summer carnival, Eddie on his lap. The two finally got together over the summer and got to do all of the annoying couple stuff Richie had been dreaming about since middle school. “I miss my Eds” he whined quietly to his empty dorm room. All he wanted was to curl up next to Eddie and pretend his problems didn’t exist for awhile.

He responded to a text from his dad (he texted his parents multiple times a day and usually facetimes his mom a couple times a week, which was something he needed) before he went into the Notes app on his phone and looked at some of the jokes he’d spent his day writing. Richie often fantasied about what he was going to do when he was famous for his comedy (because it had to happen, it just had to.) He didn’t know whether or not that counted as a delusion of grandeur since being a successful comedian was an actual goal he’d had since childhood.

His overthinking about his illness for the millionth time that day was interrupted when he heard the door open and then Stan’s familiar voice. “Hey, Richie.”

“Stan the man!” Richie chirped. He got lonely being in his dorm all the time.

“How are you doing today?” Stan asked, trying to be gentle but not patronizing.

“I’m tired but like not tired and I hate college and want to drop out and I spent all day researching what drugs are like.” Aside from weed, Richie hadn’t ever done drugs, but he thought about them a lot. Things like Xanax, Codeine, Ketamine, whatever. The one he always went back to, however, was cocaine. He didn’t know what exactly was drawing him to drugs, maybe that they might take the pain away. He knew they were bad but he didn’t care. The people in his life did a great job of keeping him away from them.

“Chee” Stan sighed deeply. He also internally scoffed at Richie’s idea of “researching”; of course he’d spend his time researching what drugs are like instead of stuff for his history essay. Richie immediately felt another pang of guilt and regretted saying anything.

“But I haven’t done them! I’m just curious, y’know? Um, I don’t know, tell me about your day” Richie rambled. Stan climbed onto Richie’s bed and sat next to him.

“Well my dumb bitch professor decided to change the due date of our project because it ‘shouldn’t take that long’ so now I have like four days less to finish” Stan grumbled. Richie patted his arm sympathetically. “Anyway, I think the Losers minus Mike and Bill are gonna go get ice cream soon.”

Richie’s eyes lit up at the thought of seeing all of his friends. Mike and Bill were apparently swamped with an English essay that they had to do well on (being English majors and all) but it would be nice to see Ben and Bev for the first time in way too long. And of course, his Eddie would be there.

“Aw yay, I missed seeing Bev. And of course I get to see both of the inspirations for all of my wet dreams-“

“Beep beep Richie” Stan rolled his eyes. Even with Stan assuming the roles of roommate and sort of caretaker for Richie, the dynamic of their friendship barely changed.

“It’s not my fault Ben decided to get hot in college!”

“That doesn’t mean I need to hear about the things your perverted ass-“

The playful bickering was interrupted by a knock at the door.

“It’s probably Eddie” Stan got up to answer. He opened the door and found Eddie standing there.

“Eds!” Richie lept up to hug his boyfriend. Eddie squeezed him gently. He could tell by the look in Richie’s deep chocolate eyes that things were wearing on him and he needed extra affection.

“Hi Chee, how are things?” Eddie stood on his toes (seriously, why was Richie so tall?) and planted a kiss on Richie’s cheek, getting his pink gloss on Richie in the process. Richie and Eddie were finally able to openly experiment with their more feminine characteristics and interests now that they were away from Derry, which included

Eddie wearing lipgloss sometimes.

Richie ran his fingers through Eddie's hair. "College fucking sucks" he said solemnly, no real emotion in his voice.

"I know baby, but we're gonna get some ice cream and hang out with everyone and it's gonna be fine."

It was not fine. Richie was, of course, delighted to see everyone again, but he was on edge the whole time. He felt like he had to contribute to the conversation or else he would explode from just sitting there. It wasn't like when he would crack crass jokes with his friends like normal. This time he would occasionally interject with something rambling or something that sounded stupid or rude while other people were talking. When someone would say something funny he would laugh almost too hard, because he just wanted to have fun damnit, even if he had to force it. Something was off about this and Richie got the feeling that everyone could tell and just wanted him to leave.

He decided halfway through to just shut up and eat whatever bites of his double chocolate chip that he had left. He'd already polished off most of his ice cream within the first few minutes (he also was eating more lately because he felt almost a compulsion and also food was so good) but he was too self-conscious to go up and get another one. He felt like everyone was judging him enough. And he couldn't enjoy himself-

"Are you alright, Rich?" Ben asked, looking concerned. Richie snapped out of his dark thoughts and noticed that all of the Losers (especially Eddie) looked concerned.

"Yeah, babe, you haven't even talked about fucking my mom at all, and there's been plenty of opportunities" Eddie added. Richie chuckled maybe a bit more than necessary at that, but gave no real answers.

"We're worried about you, Richie" Bev put her hand over Richie's on the table. "Please talk to us." Stan and Ben nodded, as if to say "please" as well.

“It’s,” Richie bit his lip, trying to think of how to put this. “Kinda hard to explain.”

Because really, how could he explain this to people who weren’t mentally ill? How is he supposed to tell them that he’s got so many plans for his future life as a super famous comedian but he’s also thinking about killing himself because of that little part of him that’s very much aware that there’s no actual guarantee of it happening? How are they going to understand what he means when he says that he can’t feel any normal human emotions right now?

“Do you just want to go back to my dorm and watch some Netflix, Chee?” Eddie said, squeezing his hand gently. “You don’t look like you’re in a good place for social interaction right now.”

“Um” Richie could feel himself blushing, which was the last thing he wanted.

“We won’t be mad, honey” Bev reassured him.

And that’s how Richie found himself curled up next to Eddie on his bed, as Eddie tried to pick a movie for the two of them. Richie traced a finger over his own hip, where he’d attempted to give himself a tattoo during a hypomanic episode in the summer. He’d used a sewing needle and pen ink and tried to put a small sun and moon on his hip, but was now left with a couple faded lines of ink in the only places he actually managed to go deep enough in his skin.

Richie snuggled in closer to Eddie, nuzzling his neck slightly, and just tried to pretend his problems weren’t there. Jesus, does college fucking suck.

2. Suicide Is Painless

Summary for the Chapter:

Richie has a rough time with finals

Notes for the Chapter:

So I've decided this is going to be an ongoing thing because it turns out projecting my issues onto fictional characters is really therapeutic for me. TW for this chapter because even though it's listed in the tags, this chapter deals exclusively with self harm and suicidal thoughts.

Self harm was by no means the healthiest way of coping (it wasn't a healthy coping mechanism at all) but it was familiar to Richie. To him it was a drastic reaction for when something horrible happened. Like when you crack under pressure and get a D on your finals. That was how Richie found himself in the bathroom of his dorm, dragging his razor across his upper thighs.

Blood slowly drained out of the cuts he made. Richie grimaced at the stinging feeling and tried to remind himself why he was doing it. If he weren't so emotionally damaged he probably would just sob hysterically on his bed (which also sounded pretty good to him), but he couldn't make tears happen or even feel genuine sadness, so his anger took over. He was mad at himself for doing poorly, mad at college for being hard, mad at the fucking world because it was hard for him to just exist, so he took it out on himself. After all, it was his own stupid fault this happened. Every cut he made hurt, yet it didn't make him feel any sense of relief.

Richie took a break to put some toilet paper over his cuts to mop up the blood. It wasn't running, but his thighs were starting to get messy. He watched his blood clot on the paper, then lifted it up to see whatever wasn't mopped up making even more of a mess.

He finally relented with his cruel treatment of himself and decided that was enough for today. He was alone with the bathroom door

shut, but he didn't want to take the risk of Stan coming back early without giving him enough time to hide the evidence.

Richie tried his hardest to cease the blood with more toilet paper, but it would continue pouring out the second he lifted the paper up. He sighed, first out of sadness and then out of discomfort as he stood up and really felt the sting. He was definitely gonna feel this for a couple days.

Band aid wrappers littered the floor along with the bloody pieces of toilet paper as Richie patched himself up. He awkwardly placed bandages of varying sizes over his cuts until he was safely covered and guaranteed not to get blood stains on the inside of his jeans. He scrambled to pick up all wrappers and bloody paper and promptly flushed down the toilet (There was no way to put them in the trash can without it being suspicious.) After putting his jeans on, he washed his hands to get the blood off of his fingers, scrubbing extra hard to rid himself of the lingering scent.

The razor blade was put back in his secret hiding place in his desk drawer and Richie curled up on his bed, making it look like nothing ever happened. He turned on the TV and tried to tune out all of his feelings.

His suicidal thoughts had become more frequent in the past couple days, but he was starting to become okay with it. Aside from a small feeling of anxiety in chest, he didn't feel anything about the thought of ending his own life. He was pretty sure he wasn't gonna try anything, but he'd made peace with the idea that he was probably gonna end up killing himself eventually.

Richie started having suicidal thoughts when he was twelve and they came and went throughout the years. But the funny thing about being suicidal from a young age is that the thoughts become a normal part of the brain. Hence why Richie hadn't really prepared for college or planned for life as a whole, he'd spent his teenage years assuming that he would just end it at some point.

Richie attempted suicide only once when he was thirteen. His parents spent (more like wasted, he thought) a lot of time and money to help get him better, yet Richie felt like he never would get better. He

harbored so much guilt over this, especially since he continued to see suicide as an option after everything.

Richie's own mind was a master manipulator, convincing him that no one loved him or wanted him, that he had nothing to live for and no one would miss him, that he was worthless and would never be able to function in society, that suicide was the only option for him. But somehow he never was able to bring himself to attempt again.

Maybe it was the guilt that everything his parents had done for him would have been a complete waste that kept him alive, he wasn't sure. But whatever it was, there was something in him that kept him going despite everything that went on in his head. It was the reason he was lying in bed instead of on the ground in the bathroom drenched in his own blood, even if it would have been so easy to use the razor and end it all right there.

Two hours later, he was thankful for the thing (whatever it was) keeping him from suicide as he sat in his dorm laughing with Stan while they watched a movie. He wasn't exactly expecting a light at the end of the tunnel, but he was still interested in seeing where his tunnel led, and that was good enough.